# CLOSING

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working to place most of them in stores located in the surrounding area.

"We're doing our best to take care of them," he said.

When the district managers made the announcement, employee Sara Alvarado said, "Some people just immediately started crying because that job's all they have. Overall, it was pretty sad."

Even a week after the announcement was made, she said, "It's still really hard to comprehend. We will all have to re-establish our lives and our jobs. ...

"That was really my first job."

Alvarado said she's worked there for a little over a year and her co-workers were "really warm" towards her.

She said she wouldn't be as outspoken if she hadn't worked there.

"I owe that place a lot," she said.

"I don't like it," remarked one anonymous employee. "I like the store and I like the company. I work with good people."

Shoppers echo their displeasure at the store's upcoming closure.

"I don't like the idea of Brookshire's closing," said Mineral Wells resident Mary Ann Jackson. "I like Brookshire's because they keep everything clean."

Contemplating what the store's closing means for the employees, she remarked, "I hate to see them have to find another job."

Shopper Linda Price said she will miss the store when it closes.

"They have a lot of different varieties," she noted.

Skip Cox wasn't surprised by Brookshire's decision to close down.

"I kind of figured it was coming," he said. "I think it's a shame. ... I like Brookshire's being here because it's handy [but] there's not enough traffic here."

Another factor, he said, is the cost for groceries.

"They just can't compete," he said. "You've got to be able to match prices. It's a low to mid [income] town."

Cox explained that if shoppers didn't have the money to buy gas to get to the grocery stores, they weren't likely to shop all around town.

Like Cox, Lela Gilstrap said it was easier to shop stores where she could get everything in one stop but she was saddened to see the store close.

"I think it's horrible. It gives people no choice whatsoever," Gilstrap commented. "I like Brookshire's because it's clean and prices are very comparable."

Shannon McGary, Mineral Wells Chamber of Commerce executive director, said the store's closing came as a surprise to her.

"Any time a business closes, it's a sad day for Mineral Wells and it's especially sad for Brookshire's because they've been so community-oriented ... and community-minded all these years," she said.

The impact of the store's closing is multifaceted, McGary noted. "[There's the] fact people are now out of a job and the fact we're down a retail business right now when we're trying to grow the retail market."

Brookshire's location will join David's and Cheapo Depot as large areas of retail space in Mineral Wells available for another company.

"We're working hand in hand with those real estate companies [and] doing everything we can" to attract more business, McGary said. "We're working really hard to fill those empty spaces."

According to the Brookshire's company Web site, there are 154 stores in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi that operate under the Brookshire's, Super 1 Foods and Olé Foods name.